



Natural Resources Conservation Service
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CRP NOTE #110
September 8, 2003

This Note transmits the revised NRCS and FSA roles and responsibilities for the CRP. This guidance was jointly signed off and agreed to by both agencies earlier this year and supercedes the existing language in the 2-CRP Manual (Revision 4, Amendment 1) which was issued in May 2003.

Since passage of the 2002 Farm Bill Legislation and subsequent rule making, the Secretary of Agriculture has made some important changes in the administration of CRP.

CRP Roles:

CRP is administered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) through the State and local FSA committees with technical assistance by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and other cooperating agencies.

While the roles and responsibilities of NRCS and FSA for CRP are contained in NRCS Part 539, Handbook for Assisting FSA Programs (now obsolete), and FSA's-CRP Handbook, we are also providing them through this reminder memorandum.

FSA Responsibilities:

FSA Washington Office:

- Program development- (develop and maintain rules and regulations, handbooks, notices, etc.)
- Program management
- Program coordination
- Publish and display CRP data
- Interpret policy
- Provide national training

FSA State Committee (STC):

Within the authorities of FSA Handbook 2-CRP, STC will:

- Direct the administration of CRP
- Adjusts SRR's within national parameters
- Documents actions taken in minutes or other written records
- Approves State research projects
- Determines whether meritorious relief is applicable on a case-by-case basis
- Establishes a per acre maintenance rate, with State Technical Committee and NRCS consultations, according to paragraph 100 and 114
- Upon recommendation from local Service Centers, designate areas of the State control devices are warranted and cost-effective to protect hardwood tree seedlings on CP 22 or CP 23
- Establishes the beginning date of the primary nesting season for wildlife in consultation with the state Technical Committee

- Notifies Director, ECPD, each time the beginning date the primary nesting season is changed by STC, in consultation with the State Technical Committee.

FSA County Committee (COC):

Within the authorities of FSA Handbook 2-CRP, COC will:

- Fully comply with national and State CRP policies
- Document actions taken in COC minutes
- Document recommendations for relief to STC according to this 2-CRP and 4-CP
- Ensure that successors in interest to CRP-1's meet requirements in 5-CM or 1-PL, as applicable
- Ensure that participants are taking necessary actions to establish scheduled conservation practices

NRCS Responsibilities:

NRCS National Headquarters:

- Program development - (assist in the development of rules and regulations, handbooks, notices, NRCS memos, bulletins, manuals, handbooks, etc.)
- Provide input into program
- Program coordination
- Provide input into interpreting program policy
- Assist with national training as needed

Deputy Chief for Programs:

- Provides overall national leadership for NRCS coordination of program development and implementation with FSA and other agencies

Director, Conservation Operations Division:

- Provides national program leadership representing the NRCS Chief in maintaining liaison and working relationship with program leaders in FSA.
- Provides policy and procedural guidance on CRP operations to NRCS State Offices
- Coordinates training for State and Regional CRP Activities

NRCS Regional Offices:

- The Regional Conservationist is responsible for providing oversight and evaluation of CRP to ensure:
- Consistency in the use of the RUSLE, and WEQ
- Consistency with the water and wind erosion index
- Technical adequacy of conservation planning
- Technical adequacy of conservation treatment implementation

NRCS State Offices:

State Conservationists provide leadership for NRCS activities associated with CRP activities in the State.
State Conservationists:

- Represent NRCS and chair the State Technical Committee
- Develop agreements with other Federal and State agencies, as applicable
- Designate staff to carryout NRCS responsibilities at the State and Field levels recertification, decertification, and certification renewal of technical service provide (TSP)

- Certify, recertify, and decertify TSPs
- Provide a listing of certified technical service providers to assist the producer or Department when necessary in carrying out CRP activities
- Provide quality assurance for technical service provided by TSPs

NRCS Area Offices:

- In States with Area Offices, or the equivalent, the Area Conservationist will carryout NRCS responsibilities for CRP as delegated by the State Conservationist

NRCS Field Offices:

Coordination and Representation:

- Coordinates responsibilities and represents NRCS with:
- FSA
- FSA COC
- State Forestry Agency
- State Wildlife Agency
- Conservation Districts
- Other agencies, as appropriate

Eligibility Determinations (Continuous CRP Only):

- Determines CRP eligibility, of offered land:
 - On a field-by-field basis
 - Completing applicable items on CRP-2 form. **NRCS is NOT responsible to determine the acreage of the predominate soils on each offer and the resulting rental rate.**

Reporting and Records Management:

- Reports to FSA COC promptly:
 - Findings that may affect a producer's eligibility, including changes in cropping history or management
 - Cases of apparent noncompliance with program requirements
 - Complete no more than 10 percent of all practice certification (Form # AD-862) for all CRP practices nationwide for which NRCS has technical responsibility for the assigned practices identified in the conservation plan. **Minnesota will develop and distribute an annual policy regarding the certification of CRP practices using form AD-862. With the distribution of this guidance NRCS field staff will not certify CRP practice completion using form AD-862 without approval from the State Office.**
 - Secure only signatures on the CRP conservation plan of producers with a share greater than zero.

Planning and Application:

- Assists producers with:
 - Seeding recommendations and coordinating wildlife habitat standards with State Wildlife agencies
 - Developing a conservation plan containing all appropriate practices including operation and maintenance. **Planners can use the following options for providing conservation planning information to CRP participants;**
 - 1) Use the Minnesota developed CRP practice plans distributed in MN Bulletin 180-3-11. These plans must also include the appropriate planning information for mid-**

contract management (include the planning sheets for either grass seeding or tree planting) or,

2) Use either the Cons. 68 form or the AD-1155 form with appropriate ToolKit provided practice narratives and mid-contract operation and maintenance information or,

3) Use the Cons 68 form and the AD-1155 Contract Support Document.

The AD-1155 is not required with CRP contracts. Planners and participants may find it beneficial to use the AD-1155 when contracts have 3 or more practices to be scheduled for establishment.

- Complete Form # NRCS-CPA-52 or State adapted form (in MN use Form MN-CPA-039) for each contract; this includes General, Continuous and CREP contracts.
- Developing a haying and grazing plan for managed haying and grazing including operation and maintenance
- Marking redefined field boundaries
- Practice layout, survey, and design
- Service no more than 10 percent of all practice certification (Form #AD-862) for all CRP practices nationwide for which NRCS has technical responsibility for the assigned practices identified in the conservation plan. **Minnesota will develop and distribute an annual policy regarding the certification of CRP practices using form AD-862. With the distribution of this guidance NRCS field staff will not certify CRP practice completion using form AD-862 without approval from the State Office.**
- Applying NRCS-assigned conservation practices to ensure that they meet FOTG standards. **Field staff should not confuse the waiving of form AD-862 for CRP practice certification and our NRCS policy requirement that all reported practices (including CRP) be properly documented using guidance in the MN FOTG Section IV. Field staff will continue to properly document all completed CRP practices according to policy.**
- Obtaining conservation district approval of conservation plans
- Coordinating planning of tree planting with the producer and State Forestry Agency representative for development of the tree planting plan to be referenced in the conservation plan (NRC-AD-1155, NRCS-AD-1155A, or other approved electronic form)

Plan Certification

- Certifies on NRCS AD-1155, NRCS-AD-1155A, or approved electronic conservation planning form as indicated above, that the conservation plan meets minimum requirements before obtaining the Conservation District review and approval.

Complete Status Reviews:

- Conducts no more than 10 percent of all the annual status review nationwide based on FSA's recommendation. **Minnesota will develop and issue additional guidance for this activity on an annual basis. With the distribution of this guidance NRCS field staff will not complete any CRP status reviews without approval from the State Office.**

NRCS Employee Prohibitions:

- NRCS employees are prohibited from servicing CRP-2's on land that they, or their immediate family, own, rent or lease.
- The Area or State Conservationist will designate another NRCS employee to service CRP-2's

Direct questions on the information in this bulletin to your Assistance State Conservationist (FO) or Paul Flynn, State Resource Conservationist.

WILLIAM HUNT
State Conservationist

DIST: AC
FO
ARC
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